

Summary of Town wide Financial Summit Community Input Results

The following is a summary of the ideas shared at the town wide financial summit community input meeting held on June 14th, 2007. We collated the results in order to be both clear and concise. There are three separate sections to the summary based on the three questions that were asked:

1. What are the most important services the town and school provide?
2. What are the least important services the town and schools provide?
3. As a group, come up with three ideas for town officials to explore that you think will help town government with the financial issues presented in the Town Manager's presentation. These can be ways to increase income, ways to cut costs, or changes in the services currently provided based on what you believe the town's priorities should be.

The answers to the first two questions were compiled by table and to the extent we could determine it we have indicated how many participants from a table supported each priority.

The answers to the last questions have been divided into five groups: Ideas for the town, ideas for the schools, ideas that we are already exploring, general ideas that apply to town and schools, and ideas that would require a change in state or federal law to implement.

Some great thinking was done by the many thoughtful residents who attended the meeting and all of the ideas and suggestions raised that evening are included here. Some of the suggestions made at the meeting align with projects the town is already pursuing. The next step is to assess the feasibility and impact of those ideas not already under consideration.

These results will be on the agenda at the next financial summit meeting in early October. The planning for that meeting will begin right after Labor Day. The plan right now is for the main topic of that summit to include both a review of projects already under way and new ideas to reduce costs, enhance revenue and increase the effective impact of services.

We want to thank everyone who gave up a lovely June evening to grapple with these rather dry issues and we look forward to continuing to seek community input over the course of the next year.

Summary Most Important Services

Table Service (number of responses)

Table 1

Public Safety (4)
Public Works (4)
Education (4)
Libraries (3)

Table 2

Basic Services (5)
 Police
 Fire
 Public Works
 Education

Table 3

Town:
 Safety
 Sanitation
 Infrastructure
Schools:
 Education of all children
 Reading in lower grades – library
 Practical knowledge/ Realistic views

Table 4

Public Safety (4)
Public Works (4)
Education (4)
Library (2)

Table 5

Roadways
Teaching Staff
Public Safety
School Nurses
Library

Table 6

Safety
Education – Basic
Police
Public Works
Library
Infrastructure

Table 7

Education (4)
Infrastructure (3)
Public Works (1)
Public Safety (1)

Table Service (number of responses)

Table 8

Did not detail important or least important services, see Ideas

Table 9

Town

Public Works (3)

Fire (2)

Police (2)

Schools:

Nurses (2)

Crossing Guards

Circulation

Library at middle school

Table 10

Infrastructure

Education

Public Works

Public Safety

Table 11

Education

Public Safety

Public Works

Libraries

Table 12

Police

Fire

Education

Health and Human Services

Table 13

Fire (2)

Libraries (2)

Public Works (2)

Police (1)

Summary Least Important Services

Table Service (number of responses)

Table 1

- Free trash collection
- Expensive High School sports
- Town-owned & managed Real Estate (i.e. Parmenter)
- Cemeteries
- Ice Rink
- Town-provided clean-up & outdoor maintenance outside businesses...shop owners should take this responsibility
- Ambulance Service (town well covered by private ambulance)

Table 2

- Curbside collection
- Minuteman
- Curbside recycling

Table 3

- Town
 - Crosswalks
 - Third Fire Station
 - "White-trash" pickup
 - Parking meters
 - Tree Warden
 - Animal control Officer
 - Less property assessment
 - Less trash pickup
- School
 - Sports
 - Field Maintenance
 - Club Support
 - Support for senior citizens
 - Decorations/banners
 - Closing an elementary school

Table 4

- After-School athletic field maintenance
- Cemeteries
- Branch Library Services

Table 5

- Branch Library (3)
- Refuse Collection & Disposal (3) (Happy to pay for this)
- Cemeteries (2)
- Adult Library Programs
- Animal Control

Table Service (number of responses)

Table 6

Level – Fire Services – NOT Emergency/Ambulance
Branch Library
Art – K-12
Music – K-12
Trash Collection
Competitive Athletics

Table 7

Police
Fire (charge for mutual aid)
Close schools and leave town
Remove some school courses

Table 8

No input

Table 9

Town
Branch library (2)
Animal control
Community policing
Cemetery
Parks and Recreation
Adult programs
School
Administration– Curriculum and instruction leaders
Elementary Reading Administration
Academic challenge and enrichment program
Reduce guidance counseling

Table 10

Police/Fire – Regionalize/Mutual
Automotives
What's driving special Ed.?

Table 11

Snow plowing – now inefficient
Branch library not needed
Cemetery, Elderly, Youth

Table 12

Refuse collection & disposal
Animal control
Cemeteries
Emergency Management
Academic challenge and enrichment program

Table 13

Town
Branch Library (2)
Cemeteries
Animal control
Schools
Curriculum/ Instruction
Reading support Staff (2)
Academic challenge and enrichment program (Elementary and Middle schools)

Ideas

Town Ideas:

Pay as you throw - Restructure curbside refuse collection
Increased traffic enforcement/fines
Duplication of Finance Department in Town Government-Treasurer, Town Manager
Automate Town Departments and reduce head count
Town endowment fund
Move Fox to Gibbs
Close police and fire, contract with surrounding towns for services
More efficient fire staffing – match staffing to load (80% of calls during 16 hours)
Town property insurance pool program
Diversity training for town employees
Transfer Water/Sewer to MWRA
Merge functions of Nurses and Health Education
Renegotiate Town salaries
Town centered Medicare HMO

Ideas which we are currently exploring:

Health Insurance:

- Join State program
- Regionalize
- Examine benefits and revamp
- Streamline
- Retiree contributions
- Illness prevention

Pensions- join State pools

Regionalization:

- Fire Services
- Public Health
- Dispatch
- Supplies
- Energy Use
- Public Works
- Community Safety
- Dispatch

Consolidate Town-School Facilities where possible

Review compensation to public employees. Work with unions to rebalance wages vs. benefits

Energy conservation – energy audit – Lighting, Heating

Ambulance:

- Fire Department Paramedics & Expand Ambulance Service
- Privatize ambulance service- Duplication of fire response & Armstrong Ambulance

Education Ideas:

Special Education:

- Cut costs by grouping students
- Urge legislature to get more \$\$
- Economies of scale and efficiency
- Insurance approach to indemnify town against special education costs
- Increase cost effectiveness at Spec Ed service delivery
- Special Ed mandated costs need to be shifted to Town and give schools back the money instead of it coming out of the school budget
- Pull special education out of the school budget

Can we have one principal for two elementary schools?

Can we share specialty teachers like language with other school district
 Schools purchasing – schools working together to reduce costs
 School endowment fund
 Explore alternative uses of active school buildings
 Planned program budget in schools (explanation of curriculum)
 More efficient school lunches (reduce waste in food production & disposal)
 Analysis of school buildings
 Combine SS & English head - Get rid of Reading Stipend
 Combine Social Studies/English into humanities
 Cell phone towers on schools
 Minuteman Tech:

- Minuteman to change governing structure/ withdraw
- Market Minuteman to other Towns or get other Towns to send more students

General Ideas:

Examine all functions for duplication – Zero base budgeting & not base line budgeting
 Override/Debt Exclusion

Go to a commercial rate for establishing the tax basis

Increase Revenues

- Enforce overnight parking
- Parking Meters
- Expand revenue base: more commercial taxes, restaurant, liquor, entertainment
- User fees for services like inoculations, etc. on sliding scale
- Sell excess properties to bring revenues - 3 elementary schools outside assessment if what we can gain is greater and unload
- Small pieces of Arlington all over – unusable properties - Invest in them, assess, public auction
- More user fees – needs based for Health Services

Commercial Development

- Favoring commercial development over residential development
- Change commercial zoning to add more vertical floors
- Invest in Broadway businesses to populate that street with more tax generating businesses
- Commercial Development – Mugar Site
- More commercial base

Business involvement helping in areas of weakness

- Volunteer workers – under professional person

Enhance Tourism-Promote Town tourism

Pensions:

- Pension fund investment could be improved to increase returns
- Join state pension fund (\$750K)

Cuts when necessary – broad based – “anti nibbling”

Explore Private & Public grants

Community Preservation Act revenue

Analysis of town buildings every year report to town meeting

Combine town & school library functions

Town to sell intellectual property

Energy Efficiency

- Investigate energy efficiency improvements
- Solar & Wind power

Ideas which require State or Federal Law changes/ action:

- Restore cuts in state aid
- Early retirement ages
- Pressure state to do less in mandated programs which town must pay
- Go to 401K's for Town employees
- Change Proposition 2.5
- Adjust Motor Vehicle tax to reflect book values for vehicles
- Adjust Motor Vehicle tax to fuel economy
- Reduce depreciation rate for auto excise tax (rate drops quickly on new cars)
- Local options tax
- Can we use someone besides police officers to deal with traffic to cut overtime
- Allow cash strapped homeowners to turn their homes over to town, give up equity, future property tax charges
- Arts designation – entertainment tax
- Restrict ability of spouses of town workers who are covered by their employers to choose health insurance from Town. Have employer's spouses company reimburse when employees don't use other benefit.
- Privatize cemeteries
- Local option taxes on meals